



Connecticut School Counselor Association

A Chartered Division of the American School Counselors Association

Testimony of Virginia A. DeLong
Government Relations & Advocacy Chairman
Connecticut School Counselor Association

in opposition of

S.B. No. 1095 AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Education Committees

Public Hearing - March 1, 2023

Representative Currey, Senator McCrory, Representative McCarty, Senator Berthel, Vice Chair Lepper, Vice Chair Winfield and esteemed committee members my name is Virginia DeLong and I am a Director of School Counseling and Chairman of the Government Relations and Advocacy Committee for the CT School Counselor Association. Thank you for the opportunity to offer **testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 1095 - AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS**. Specifically, our concern is that school counselors should not be doing the work of a School Resource Officer as it is in direct conflict with the work and role of the school counselor.

The Connecticut School Counselor Association represents over 1,400 school counselors across Connecticut who work with students in the areas of academics, career work, and social emotional support and education. This bill adds that ***“a school resource officer's duties concerning, and procedures for, the restraint of students, use of firearms and school-based arrests, and (ii) that individuals who are school counselors, social workers, psychologists, aides or other staff members and have appropriate training and ongoing supports may be assigned the duties of a school resource officer”***. This is a direct conflict with the role of the school counselor.

The American School Counselor Association's position statement on the *School Counselor and Discipline* states “to most effectively promote student achievement and development, school counselors must maintain strength-based relationships with students and, therefore, are not involved in administering discipline. The school counselor should be, by policy, designated as a neutral and resourceful consultant, mediator and student advocate” (ASCA, 2019).

School counselors are highly trained professionals who work with students in three domains: academic, career, and social emotional. Our job is to form relationships with students so that we can work with students to be successful in school and ultimately when they leave our buildings upon graduation. We are trained mental health professionals who meet with students who may be struggling socially and emotionally, providing support for students while they are in our care during the school day, and offer resources and referrals as necessary for support outside of the school day. It is important to note that “School counselors should be, by policy, designated as neutral and resourceful consultants, mediators and student advocates. It is not the school counselor's role to serve as an enforcement agent for the school but rather be a significant contributor to the development of the prevention and intervention programs through which problem behaviors are managed and positive behaviors are nurtured” (ASCA, 2019).

Asking school counselors and other support professionals to take on the responsibilities of the School Resource Officer is not only irresponsible and dangerous, but it is unethical. School counselors should not be doing restraints or other school resource officer tasks. It is against the school counselor code of ethics to be providing any type of discipline for students as highlighted in the [ASCA Ethical Standards for](#)



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[School Counselors](#) (ASCA, 2022). It is our responsibility to engage in professional relationships with students that foster student success.

We are in a mental health crisis and have been for quite some time before the pandemic occurred. The pandemic has certainly exacerbated this problem. There is certainly an increased need for more student support staff individuals including school counselors in our schools to address the ever growing mental health needs of our students. However, there are also situations (i.e. violence, etc.) where it is important to have other staff, like school resource officers, that can deal with issues that are out of the scope of our roles.

Adding more work that is not appropriate for the role in which we are trained, to the already full plates of school counselors and other mental health professionals in the building, is unacceptable. We should be more concerned with how we can hire more student support staff, like school counselors, to address the mental health needs of our students and look for ways to define the role of the SRO while providing proper training, instead of adding more inappropriate work to an already overworked group of professionals.

I would ask that you modify this bill and remove section ii *“that individuals who are school counselors, social workers, psychologists, aides or other staff members and have appropriate training and ongoing supports may be assigned the duties of a school resource officer”*.

School counselors should not be doing the work of the School Resource Officer as it is unethical and in direct conflict with the work and role of the school counselor. I would be happy to discuss this further. I have provided my contact information below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Virginia A. DeLong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Virginia A. DeLong
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